

- Priest Reservoir Hazard Reduction Project (Hetch Hetchy Water and Power) – The objective of this project is to maintain a fuel profile around Priest Reservoir that reduces the potential for wildfire damage to the high value domestic water supply. Mechanical, hand, and animal treatments will be utilized to reduce the fuel loading in specific areas around the reservoir. Approximately 150 acres will be treated per year in 2005 and 2006

FIRE SAFE COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Calaveras Foothills Fire Safe Council

2001 Fire Safe Council Formation Grant Project

In March 2001, TCU staff applied to the Stanislaus National Forest for the USFS Dependent Rural Communities Grant to seek funding for the Fire Safe Council Formation Project. This project was proposed to expand the original Tuolumne-Calaveras Fire Safe Council into four new Fire Safe Councils centered on each of the Four east-west State Highway Corridors (Highways 26, 4, 108 and 120) in the Unit. The Fire Safe Councils are a coalition of government, public and private sector individuals and organizations that share a common, vested interest in wildland fire prevention and loss mitigation for the area. The four councils have provided a needed link for input and cooperation between the public and private sectors to the fire agencies in the development of projects for the National and California Fire Plans. In September 2001, the Stanislaus National Forest awarded TCU with \$101,300 to contract with a consultant who would coordinate the formation of the new fire safe councils.

In September 2002, TCU awarded the coordinator contract to Mark Valle of Corporate Visions from Carlsbad, California. Mark met with Unit staff in October to formulate a list of potential council members and develop a plan for starting the councils. The councils are now non-profit corporations certified by both the State of California and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The councils have been developing and presenting their strategies to spread the fire safe message and reduce the wildfire hazards that exist in their communities. They are working with the fire protection agencies within each council's geographic area.

2001 Fire Safe Council Operating Costs Grant

After the Stanislaus National Forest awarded TCU the grant to contract with a coordinator to expand the current Tuolumne-Calaveras Fire Safe Council to four new Fire Safe Councils,

TCU pre-fire management staff applied for the 2001 Community-Based Wildfire Prevention Grant through the Sacramento Regional Foundation. TCU was awarded \$20,000 to provide operational funds for information and education materials, and general expenses to each of the four new Fire Safe Councils to assist in their establishment and planning for the next 18 months. The four councils used this money to file for corporate and non-profit status, provide travel expenses for Mark Valle to attend the statewide Fire Safe Council meetings, and purchase supplies, brochures and marketing materials. This grant ended on June 30, 2003.

Fire Safe Council Operations 2003 Through 2004

Upon completion of the Grant contract, the Calaveras Foothills and Sierra Highway 4 Fire Safe Councils continued under volunteer members and contributions. The Secretary for the Calaveras Foothills Fire Safe Council contributed to shared information between the two Councils with the absence of a Council Coordinator. In December of 2003, a decision was made to merge the 2 Fire Safe Councils into one due to declining volunteer membership and difficulty in obtaining funding for two separate Councils. The joint Boards voted to merge under the Calaveras Foothills Fire Safe Council articles of incorporation and place the Sierra Highway 4 Fire Safe Council on an inactive status. There is now only one FSC serving all of Calaveras County and western Alpine County.

The Calaveras County Board of Supervisors on January 5, 2004 approved a minute order authorizing the allocation of Federal Forest Reserve Title III funds of \$40,000 for the hiring of a part-time Coordinator for the Fire Safe Council. Also included in the minute order was \$379.87 for fire prevention brochures for the Fire Safe Councils. A part-time coordinator was hired effective June 15, 2004 with a 24-month contract. Office space was being provided in Angels Camp by the County Board of Education.

The Fire Safe Council completed the preparation of five Concept papers for submission to the State Fire Safe Council Clearinghouse in February, 2004. One paper was selected for funding by the Bureau of Land Management entitled Defensible Space for Seniors and the Disabled. The grant award for \$54,000 is pending and should be funded in 2005.

During the latter part of 2003, the Fire Safe Council was awarded \$15,000 from the Calaveras County Air Pollution Control District to operate a chipper program that would reduce airborne emissions from outdoor burning. The Council hired a Chipper Contractor starting in May, 2004. The final chipping was completed on September 30, 2004. Onsite inspections and chipping of 70 properties totaling 5,463 cubic yards of material were conducted over 132 hours of contractor time. Total contract cost for our chipper contractor was \$13,200. Work included 53 lots in Bear Valley and Sky High Ranch Subdivisions.

Community outreach activities of the Calaveras Foothills Fire Safe Council included attending the Home and Garden Show; displaying the Fire Safe Brochures at the CDF booth during the County Fair; operating the informational booth at the Mokelumne Hill 4th of July event; attending the West Point and White Pines Lumberjack Days; and presentations to homeowners associations.

The Fire Safe Council also initiated work on the preparation of a Calaveras County Community Wildfire Protection Plan in coordination with the State Department of Forestry (CDF), U.S. Forest Service (USFS), all fire prevention agencies and stakeholders in the County. Work is now spearheaded by the San Andreas office of CDF with stakeholder meetings to occur in 2005.

Fire Safe Council Operations 2005

A total of seven concept papers were submitted to the State FSC Grant Clearinghouse for funding consideration. They included resubmitting the four unfunded projects that were submitted in 2004 and separating the Roadway Clearance Project into two parts. The new projects were Seniors and Disabled Defensible Space and Chipping. The Seniors and Disabled Defensible Space was selected by the US Forest Service for funding of \$66,000 and an application has been submitted. The two phases of the Roadway Clearance grant were selected by the CDF for funding under Proposition 40 for a total of \$109,400 and applications are being prepared.

An additional \$14,000 was received from the Calaveras County APCD to continue the Chipping Program in 2005 and field work is underway. A grant application was submitted to the Calaveras Community Foundation for a "Living with Fire" insert in the two weekly local newspapers published by the Enterprise. A request for \$20,000 from the Federal Forest Reserve Title III funds from Calaveras County was rejected by the Board of Supervisors because funds remained to continue the part-time FSC Coordinator for another year. The Supervisors indicated that they would consider another request from the FSC in next years' funding cycle. A fire assessment of Love Creek and Forest Meadows was requested and conducted by Fire Wise with the goal of obtaining national recognition for these two communities.

Preparation of a Calaveras County Community Wildfire Protection Plan is underway. Stakeholder meetings have been held and drafts reviewed by the CFFSC. The Plan is scheduled for completion in July 2005. Community outreach activities continued in 2005 including attending local events and distributing educational material.

Western Alpine County

While not part of the Tuolumne-Calaveras Unit's administrative boundaries, Western Alpine County is within the Arnold Battalion's sphere of influence. The TCU 2005 Pre-Fire Management Plan will be considered the CWPP covering this area until Alpine County incorporates this area into their CWPP. The wildland fuel hazard and assets at risk maps for this area can be found in the Amador El Dorado Unit Pre-Fire Management Plan.

The community of Bear Valley has recently become very active in attempting to address fuel accumulations. The homeowners association has retained the services of a Registered Professional Forester (RPF) to assess the wildland fuel hazard in the community. Based on the assessment, treatments were initiated on common areas within the Bear Valley Subdivision with the intent of reducing fuel loading. In addition, the public works department has been successful in obtaining an Alpine County Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) grant to treat fuel along roadways to improve vehicle access and evacuation routes. It is expected that the community will become more active in the future in attempting to obtain additional grants for fire safe projects.

Western Alpine County 2004 Activities

In 2004, the Bear Valley community took an important first step towards promoting and improving community fire awareness through the preparation and adoption of the *Bear Valley Community Plan to Reduce Wildfire Risk and Improve Forest Health*. This comprehensive report was prepared by RPF Don Stickers at the request of the Bear Valley Residents Inc. (BVRI). The report was funded by the Alpine County Fire Safe Council in the sum of \$1,600.00 and provides the framework for future fire planning and resource management activities in the Bear Valley community. An assessment of this nature to determine local forest health conditions had not been conducted in more than 10 years.

In 2004, 40 property owners agreed to the recommendations provided in the *Bear Valley Community Plan to Reduce Wildfire Risk and Improve Forest Health* for defensible space and fuels reduction. These property owners participated in property reviews prepared by Don Stickers. Many of those property owners filed fire safe exemptions with CDF to have over dense trees thinned on their lots in the summer and fall of 2004. Some work was completed by the fall of 2004 and more work is expected to be done in 2005.

In 2004, approximately 30 Bear Valley property owners participated in the Calaveras Foothills Fire Safe Council Chipper Program during July of 2004.

In 2004, BVRI initiated and funded a common area fuels reduction project on approximately 17 acres of land near Bear Lake. This project will be completed during the summer of 2005. Upon completion of this current project, additional future community fuels reduction projects will be identified and proposed by BVRI.

The Bear Valley Fire Department and Alpine County Road Department conducted a fuels reduction project on 2-6 foot tall Tamaracks on County right-of-way and common areas during the fall of 2004. This project will be continued during the summer of 2005. Presently they have thinned out approximately 1000 small trees.

Western Alpine County 2005 Projected Activities

Through a \$25,000 grant received from the Alpine County Resource Advisory Committee (PL 106-393), the Bear Valley community will implement a County road

right-of-way and residential fuels reduction project. Using CDF inmate crews and a contract chipper, property owners in Bear Valley will be able to reduce wildfire risk in residential areas located in Bear Valley, as well as providing improved forest health and safe evacuation routes along County roads. Additionally, Bear Valley representatives will work cooperatively with the Calaveras Foothills Fire Safe Council to provide education and technical assistance to property owners in improving defensible space.

In May of 2005, Bear Valley also applied for a \$25,000 grant under the Stanislaus National Forest Economic Recovery Program for fuels reduction on County owned land. This was not funded during this grant cycle.

The Stanislaus National Forest, Calaveras Ranger District has agreed to allow the County to implement a burn pile for residential waste and yard debris, pending approval of a Memorandum of Understanding between the two agencies. This is a cooperative effort of the Calaveras Ranger District and the Bear Valley Volunteer Fire Department.

In 2005/2006, the County will apply for Prop 40 funds to complete fuels reduction on county road right-of-ways.

BVRI will continue work to implement the recommendations provided in the *Bear Valley Community Plan to Reduce Wildfire Risk and Improve Forest Health* for development of a timber harvest plan for merchantable material in Bear Valley common areas.

Highway 108 Fire Safe Council

2004 Activities:

- Applied for six grants totaling more than \$400,000 to clear defensible space around residences and vacation cabins in Tuolumne County.
- Received and successfully completed five grant projects totaling \$252,000.
- Prepared a fire presentation that was presented to numerous service clubs.
- Assisted CDF and the Forest Service in staffing a fire safety booth at the Mother Lode Fairgrounds.
- Cleared a one-mile fuel break in Ponderosa Hills.
- Provided curbside collection of pine needles, brush and forest slash for more than 5,000 private property owners along the Highway 108 corridor.
- Chipped and sold more than 4,000 tons of forest debris to generate electricity.
- Created a website to assist property owners in clearing defensible space around their residences and vacation cabins.
- Held a public meeting the first Thursday of every month to help coordinate fire prevention activities throughout Tuolumne County.

2005 Activities:

- Write more grant applications.
- Continue the defensible space activities initiated in 2002, 2003 and 2004.
- Prepare Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPP's) to connect fire prevention activities across private/public boundaries.
- Search for new ways to economically utilize woody biomass products.
- Extend self-help education to more private property owners.
- Improve collaboration between public agencies (BLM, BIA, CDF, the Forest Service and AQMD).
- Help create and promote healthy forest initiatives.

Yosemite Foothills Fire Safe Council

2004 Activities:

- The Yosemite Foothills Fire Safe Council (YF FSC) established an office in Tuolumne County Fire Department Station 63, about five miles east of Groveland, near the intersection of Highway 120, Smith Station Road and Hells Hollow Road.
- The YF FSC received mapping software from ESRI.
- The YF FSC participated in Tuolumne County's Disaster Mitigation and Community Wildfire Protection Plan development meetings.
- The Tuolumne County Resource Advisory Committee approved YF FSC's \$24,000 funding request to help seniors and the disabled create defensible space around their homes. The initial focus of this project will be in Yosemite Vista Estates (YVE), a retirement community on Ferretti Road east of Groveland. This proposal prompted the YVE Board of Directors to hire a contractor to shred an additional 14 acres of brush adjacent to the subdivision, providing additional clearance and protection for the community. The Creek Fire in May 2004 directly threatened this community, and served as a wake-up call to the residents about their vulnerability to wildfire.
- The YF FSC met with SouthWest InterFace Team members from the U.S. Forest Service and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to identify a strategic project area for fire safe council efforts. This resulted in several planning sessions of YF FSC and a core group from the target community of Hells Hollow.

2005 Activities:

- A Hells Hollow neighborhood meeting drew many residents and property owners. Issues addressed at this meeting included hazardous fuels reduction in and around the community, and emergency access and evacuation problems such as narrow, overgrown roads and poor road and address signage. Follow-up meetings initiated by community members resulted in nearly 100% community interest and pledged participation with community fire safe projects. Another outcome of the meeting was the identification of community resources that could assist with the community's fire safe efforts. The skills identified ranged from grant writing and administration to professional expertise in logging, shredding, chipping, and bulldozing equipment. A number of residents have already cleared a significant amount of acreage either through personal efforts, private contract work, or various programs such as the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Community interest and participation encouraged the Stanislaus National Forest-Groveland Ranger District to approve a project providing 200' of thinning and fuels reduction on either side of roads crossing National Forest land in Hells Hollow.
- The YF FSC Coordinator attended the annual Yosemite Vista Estates Board Meeting and Homeowners Association meeting to explain the proposed project. Community members welcomed these efforts on their behalf and are eager for work to begin.
- The YF FSC participated in the Tuolumne County Resource Advisory Committee field trip to funded project sites in southern Tuolumne County.
- Two YF FSC grant proposals approved by the California Fire Safe Council Clearinghouse will provide \$40,000 for fuels reduction work and road improvements in the Hells Hollow area, and \$35,000 for chipping in the Groveland area. The Tuolumne County Solid Waste Division will provide space for a yard waste collection site at the former Groveland Landfill, where the public can drop off vegetative waste to be chipped and used as mulch and weed and erosion control. Besides reducing hazardous fuels, this will also reduce the amount of material disposed of by burning, and associated smoke and air pollution.

INSTITUTIONAL AND OTHER ISSUES

Although Pre-Fire Management projects provided great benefit to the citizens living in the Unit, they did impose an additional work load on TCU staff. Grant, contract and project administration took up an enormous amount of staff time. Almost all of the fuel reduction projects require a VMP agreement between CDF and the project partners. This entails the expertise of a CDF Forester to perform the CEQA analysis for the project.